

APPENDIX E: Program Stories

CENTER CITY PARKS - STORIES AND FEEDBACK

Center City programs serve any and all who happen to walk by or show up for an event because they read about it in the paper. And then they wander away again! Collecting individualized stories from our users can thus be a challenge. But we do issue surveys every year, receive emails and letters, and hear about ourselves through the media. Below is a selection of that feedback, to help tell the story of what we do as told by our park users.

CHESS and BOCCE



Sent to PKS_Info@seattle.gov by citizen Barbara Ahern: KUDOS to whomever had the brilliant idea to make the life size chess available. The music, etc. is nice however chess has made the difference. People from all walks of life are watching, waiting, learning and bringing their own sets. I walk through West Lake park every day of the year. It is so wonderful to see families, friends, people working, appearing relaxed and unafraid. The soul of West Lake has changed. Everyone feels invited, young, old, and from all walks of life. My hat is off to you!!!!



From SDOT employee Darby Watson: I was down in Pioneer Square today and I wanted to let you know that the Bocce courts were drawing a crowd, even on a cloudy Monday! Congratulations! I didn't see any chess games but there was a fabulous busker playing and it looked and felt like a different place! Thanks for all of your hard work!

DANCING TIL DUSK



Excerpt of letter from Alan Healy:I used to avoid downtown like the plague, but this program has gotten this Wedgwood resident downtown more often in the last three years than in the prior 25 years.

Dancing til Dusk provides a lot of joy for dancers, music lovers and Seattleites who happen to stroll by. A lot of tourists pass by too, stop and see a perfect example of a city that is lively, friendly, and dedicated to the arts.



A few comments from our surveys:

- ❖ The dancing in the parks got me to parks I never would have visited. I almost never came downtown before these started.
- ❖ Three and a half years ago, I had never danced a day in my life. Thanks to Lilli Ann Carey and the DANCING TIL DUSK events, I became an enthusiastic swing dancer. I now dance several times a week, and am on the board of the Savoy Swing Club 501(c)(3). Because of dancing, I lost 150 pounds in a year and a half, and met a wonderful woman. :) Many thanks!
- ❖ Dancing Til Dusk brings a whole community of Seattle area dancers to the parks, and also draws in passers-by, who I've seen stop to watch and stay. A great time of day to feel safe in a park, too!
- ❖ I just want to reiterate how much I enjoy the special programs that I've been able to attend (I work during many of the programs, but not all.) I have especially enjoyed the dancing, being a social dancer myself and knowing how good and uplifting getting together with others for such a fun activity can be. I hope that you will continue these events!



A letter from citizen David Owen: Dancing til Dusk has been a wonderful addition to the downtown area. It gives people a chance to experience Seattle in a positive way that promotes a genuine sense of community. What I love about this program is that it brings out a diverse mix of ages, and cultures. Breaking down age or ethnic barriers in this age should be a priority for any city. There is no better way to achieve this than through dance. There is no substitute for meeting people face to face and experiencing something with such universal appeal. Meeting a diverse group of people and sharing a personal experience is what makes Dancing til Dusk unique.

This program has given me a renewed appreciation for the Seattle parks. Dancing at the sculpture park during sunset was a truly memorable experience that would not have been possible without the Dancing til Dusk program. Seattle Parks and Recreation's Mission has always been to provide a safe and welcoming opportunities to play, learn, contemplate, and build community. There is no better example of this than the Dancing til Dusk program. Please continue your support for this unique and truly special program.



From Dancing til Dusk participant Sarah Parnell: In 2008, when I moved back to the Puget Sound, I discovered Seattle's vibrant social dance community, and fell in love with an activity that simultaneously meets so many of my interests. Dance is social, it's exercise, it's beauty with movement. Dance is joyful, and it very quickly became what I planned my social schedule around. When I discovered the summer Dances in the Park in 2009, I found that I had to organize my summer schedule to miss as few of these dances as possible. The ultimate dance for me is the Ball Blanc because of the pure romance of it ... waltzing in a sea of white under as the sun sets against Seattle's high-rises at Freeway Park. When I talk to others about my passion for dance, I always mention these summer dances. Not only are they are fun, but I'm also usually talking with others who don't dance, but who are curious and interested. These dances are a great introduction ... and can be enjoyed whether as a dancer or not. What better way to enjoy Seattle summers than dancing with great people to great music in Seattle's parks!!

ARTSPARKS PROGRAM



From Charlie Rathbun, 4Culture Arts: ArtSparks began as an experimental collaboration between King County's 4Culture and Seattle City Parks to redefine what "art in the parks" can be – redefining our community's preconceptions of what a park is and what is art. 4Culture's Site Specific Program is intended to break down the traditional boundaries between art, the viewer, and the environment, to take art "out of the box" and engage audiences in new and unexpected ways, to reach people who may never attend a performance hall or art museum. It encourages artists to respond to our civic environment, and address the scale and complexity of outdoor performance and installation. ArtSparks took the bold step of re-imagining Occidental Park in its entirety as a grand venue for artistic creative expression and invited artists to explore their ideas and responses. This included the trees, the surfaces, the neighborhood, the residents, the merchants, the setting, the uses, and the history. In the process, we uncovered a sector of the arts community we did not know, who do not work through the traditional framework of institutional art practices, and we inspired a generation of emerging young artists. Through ArtSparks we were reminded that artists care about their community, and about celebrating our sense of place and history. Seattle Parks staff are to be commended for embracing the spirit of this idea. More than 40 interactive projects took place over the last three years engaging dozens of Seattle's most respected performance and installation artists and delighting local merchants and parks patrons. ArtSparks illustrates the potential for our city parks to be more than just passive recipients of urban art. They can be proactive collaborators in welcoming and encouraging the creative expression of an entire community and, in the process, an evolving dynamic civic identity for our city and our region. We have really just begun to realize the potential of this partnership.



Excerpted from artSPARKS artist Mimi Allin's first day's report during her week long performance of reading Tolstoy aloud in Occidental: I read to a great many men and women, old and young, of every shape, color and size, some with luggage, some without, most sober, a few drunk, some multilingual, some with no English at all. ...happily, they lined up at the ends of the runner, waiting for the chance to walk and listen to a few lines of the novel, to be introduced or hear again what they'd read so long ago. I was surprised by the number of people who said they'd read it and by the number who found it engaging. At day's end, I sensed a great deal of gratitude for the opportunity to engage in and listen to the art of Tolstoy and for the chance to be read to. The feeling in Occidental Park, for me, is lively, safe and comfortable. It is a pleasure to be there, especially during lunch, with the tables and chairs and people in the sunshine eating and conversing. I'm looking forward to going back...



From Todd Vogel, Executive Director The International Sustainability Institute: Art Sparks in Occidental Park helps our community enormously. Our neighborhood has a large amount of illegal or unhealthy activities as well as a homeless population that can sometimes seem to dominate public spaces. The International Sustainability Institute's office is less than a block from Occidental Park, and the quality of that public space has a big impact on our block and on our businesses.

Art Sparks has helped tip the scales of Occidental Park from a drab park sometimes dominated by homeless people sleeping and drug users selling their wares to a lively space where tourists, office workers and other businesses spend time in the public space. The people drawn to see Art Sparks work help make the park – and Pioneer Square – safer and more comfortable to spend time in. It's a cheap investment in the safety and wellbeing of our community.



From ARTSparks artist Suzanne Tidwel, creator of the "tree sweaters" in Occidental—formally called Artificial Light: The ARTSparks program is an innovative partnership pairing artists with the public by providing a rotating gallery of outdoor art all summer. Bringing art into public parks makes it accessible to everyone at any time of day. It also provides the added benefit of drawing residents, business people, tourists, shoppers, art patrons, sports enthusiasts, and casual passersby into the parks. I feel so privileged to have been included in the 2011 program. So many photos were taken of Artificial Light by visitors while it was on display and these photos have passed all over the globe. I am contacted all the time by people wanting information about the project. While it was a huge undertaking, I appreciate all the support provided by Seattle Parks & Recreation during its display. Looking forward to ARTSparks 2012!!

You know...Art doesn't just happen!

CONCIERGES



From Seattle Police Officer James Garner, June 2011: During the last several months of walking a foot-beat of the Pike-Pine corridor with my partner, officer Tom Christenson, I have observed your park concierges engaged in positive activities that have enhanced the enjoyment of Westlake Park and Victor Steinbrueck Park for the betterment of all citizens....All three have been great to work with and have worked diligently to make the park-going experience a wonderful one for all visitors. If not for their outstanding efforts at engaging with citizens, setting up tables and chess sets, cleaning up litter, and providing a safe atmosphere, our jobs as police officers would be more challenging. Thank you for providing these great employees in our downtown parks! I sincerely hope you and the Seattle Parks Department can continue to offer this wonderful and meaningful service to our downtown community.



From Todd Vogel, Executive Director International Sustainability Institute; Lisa Quinn, Executive Director Feet First; Barbara Culp, Executive Director The Bicycle Alliance of Washington; Benjamin Rainbow, Owner Back Alley Bike Repair: The Concierge Program in Occidental Park is one of the best deals in town for the City of Seattle. Our neighborhood faces challenges from the drug trade, public urination and other illegal or unhealthy activities. Without some city presence in Occidental Park, the park would be nearly unusable for those interested in healthy activities. Moreover, a full-time police officer for the Park is expensive and would create an uneasy atmosphere.

The Nord Building is home to several organizations: The International Sustainability Institute, The Bicycle Alliance of Washington, Feet First and Back Alley Bike Repair. Located in the Nord Alley, directly south of Occidental Park, we are all striving to help our streets and public areas feel safe and inviting without the need for a heavy police presence. We do that by activating streets, public spaces and alleys in Pioneer Square. And we are grateful for the results created by Occidental Park's concierge staff and programming.

That staff – James, Phillip, Sammy and others – all keep eyes on the park. They also invite new people to the park – they set out tables and chairs, direct newcomers, and help coordinate ARTSparks and busking programs. The illegal activity doesn't go away completely, but through the efforts of the concierge staff, the climate in the park remains welcoming to everyone.

On bad weather days, we miss their presence and notice that the park is less inviting with more trash, unhealthy activity and lack of direction for tourists. We strongly support continuing funding for the concierge program in Seattle Parks.



From Ashanti Bitar, resident and member of Friends of Westlake Park: I am sending a quick note to let the Parks Department know how much I appreciate the concierge in Westlake Park. I work in the Seaboard Building that's located in Westlake Park. The park is literally at our front door. The concierge staff has added an overall feeling of vibrancy in the park. When I leave my office, I see people playing chess and sitting at tables and chairs. There are tourist and locals engaged in conversation with the concierge as he's giving directions or information on downtown. There is far less disruptive behavior while the concierge is on duty. Before the concierge program, I wouldn't consider sitting in the park. The park was a place that I, and many others, quickly walked through. Now, this is no longer the case. The concierge program has been an invaluable addition to Westlake Park and I hope it continues.



From Bill Mackay, President Friends of Westlake Park: The Concierge at Westlake Park, on any given day, probably interfaces with more Seattle citizens and tourists than any other single city employee. He is the point man for how our city is viewed by many. If he was not there to set-up...[chess, furniture, info booth, etc.]... the park would be much less hospitable than it is under his care...

As a well established park entity, he is someone who locals trust to point out anything that is perhaps amiss - and he is in this capacity, an important element in the Park's security. The SPD Foot Patrol Officers swing through the Park periodically, but when they rove around the rest of the Central Business District, they know that the concierge will alert them to any pending situation that requires their rapid return. In this respect he is a very key person in the most visible part of our city.

This combined Ambassador for the city\Park organizer\Watch guard is by far the best idea, and use of the city's budget, that I have seen in the 12 years that I have resided in Seattle Central Business District. The Westlake Concierge is absolutely indispensable!

BUSKERS



An impromptu flash mob described by busker Pasquale: Just wanted to tell you about the amazing flash mob that happened last Saturday at Westlake. Two show choirs, one from Utah, another from Idaho showed up to meet their buses. (over 200 teenagers) I started playing from my Broadway set and they gathered around. Together we did *Into the West* from *Lord of the Rings* and *Bring Him Home* from *Les Miserable*. They followed my every direction and sang in 3 part harmony, I still get emotional thinking about. So much talent! Just wanted to thank you for the opportunity to make this happen and bring so much positive energy to Westlake.



From busker Paul Federowicz: A sweet story, from Westlake: There were some older 'bag ladies' near to where I was playing in the center of the Park. They seemed uncertain of me, at first, but as I played one of them really started to light up and responded with occasional applause. She was likely a real beauty in her day because she was still lovely, despite rough living. After two hours, when I was done playing, she came up, wrapped in a blanket, and tentatively placed a wadded five dollar bill on my music stand, thanking me in broken English. That would be a big tip from even a successful businessperson. Unsure what to do, I continued to pack up while I made my decision. After a few minutes, I walked back over to her bench and thanked her warmly but encouraged her to take back the money, that she likely needed it. Insistent, she pushed it away, smiled, and, in her Eastern European brogue, said "From my Heart. Thank you." I decided this was her price for dignity, and I blessed her, with whatever power to bless is

within me. That was the sweetest tip I've ever received. That's why I play music for people. Not for the tip itself, but for the human contact, the relationship.

BOOK CART IN FREEWAY PARK



Excerpted from Seattle Sketcher by Gabriel Campanario:

Books at Freeway Park are almost free

"...Park concierge Kyle Emerson arrived soon after carrying boxes full of books - the Friends of Seattle Public Library host book sales here Monday through Friday from noon to 2 p.m. He said the book carts are good for the park because they bring in more for the park because they bring in more visitors and also good for the library because it gives them a way to raise money from donated books. They are all priced \$1. You can't really beat that price....Michael J. Brennan bought three paperbacks, all titles by favorite author Dean Koontz. "I'm buying so many so I can make it through the winter," said Brennan, who likes to come here to enjoy a moment of solitude away from the office. By the time I had to leave, many people were stopping by and browsing through the stacks..."

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From Riisa Conklin, Jim Ellis Freeway Park Association Program Coordinator: Before I learned that Freeway Park was five acres of meandering open spaces from 6th to 9th Avenues, I knew it simply as the book cart plaza. My bus from Madrona passed by the park every afternoon stopping at 6th and Seneca with a view down onto the book cart canopies and the bustling plaza of lunch breakers, sun bathers and book readers. "That is a destination." I thought to myself. Now, as the Program Director of the Freeway Park Association I am even more appreciative of the book carts as they anchor one end of our Park and act as an invitation to come in and explore. The members of our Association and our surrounding communities look forward to the arrival of the book carts as they signify the beginning of summer and provide opportunities for pause and connection and interaction that are rare in our busy urban environment. We look forward to the continued presence of the Seattle Library Book Carts in Freeway Park and hope to see you there soon!

GENERAL COMMENTS



From Don Blakeney, Executive Director Chinatown-International District Business Improvement Area: The Center City Parks Program has been an integral part of the revitalization of South Downtown, from Pioneer Square to Little Saigon. As a community advocate, and economic development professional, I have seen first-hand how the programming of the Center City Parks--and perhaps more importantly, the coordination that the office of Center City Parks provides--leverages private and community investments to create safe, quality parks. It's the active open spaces like Hing Hay Park and Occidental Park that enliven our streets and enrich our communities. Whether it's Dancing Till Dusk, outdoor games, or the Center City Parks support of the Chinatown-ID Night Market, Dragon Fest, or Pioneer Square's Seattle Square--our events are much stronger with the integral support of the Center City Parks staff and resources.



From Leslie Smith, Executive Director The Alliance for Pioneer Square: On behalf of the Alliance for Pioneer Square and the Pioneer Square Historic District, we want to applaud City Center Parks for the collaborative work in our neighborhood; with the long standing partnership between the neighborhood and Seattle Parks and Recreation to bring activity to Occidental Square. The special events, routine programming and the concierge service have made the park a safer, more welcoming, enjoyable place for everyone to enjoy. We attribute much of the success of the programs to the consistency in which they have been implemented.

Occidental is many things: a sunny place to have a lunch in the summer, a reliable meeting point for First Thursday, a place to grab a game of chess, a lively launching point for a march to the Sounders match, a place to remember the Firefighters, a place to get information about the neighborhood, and much more. None of this would occur without Center City Parks. Your participation makes a significant difference in downtown neighborhoods and parks; Occidental wouldn't be the same without your critical partnership. Thank you for all you do.



From Joyce Pisnanont, Seattle Chinatown-International District Public Development Authority: The Center City Parks program has played a critical role in helping to catalyze and sustain the revitalization of parks/open spaces in the International District. It is because of the Center City Parks program (and the resources it leveraged in cash, supplies and staff time) that our neighborhood's annual Night Market was able to grow into one of the C/ID's signature events that draws in thousands of visitors each year. The program also has played a critical role in helping to support programming within the International Children's Park - both before and after its recent renovation. With their support, a small fledgling group of community stakeholders have successfully been able to re-engage young children and

their families so that they can safely recreate in the only public play space in the neighborhood. The staff of the Center City Parks program are masters at leveraging resources, and stretching existing resources, to create fun and engaging opportunities for the International District community to enjoy its parks and open spaces as they should be - safe, healthy and vibrant places for people of all ages.



From resident and community organizer Jen Kelly, who developed a weekly summertime flea market in Occidental: For two years in a row, I worked with Center City Parks to activate Occidental Park in Pioneer Square with a vintage summertime market. The market had an amazing impact on the neighborhood and the positive response from tourists, residents, and business owners was overwhelming. Center City Parks was vital to the success of this event – I could not have imagined a better experience than working with Victoria and Adrienne to pull off this event.

Our park also benefits from many other CCP programs and activation activities, including ArtSparks, a park concierge, buskers, etc., that make an obvious difference on the general feeling of the neighborhood, especially with our unique population and the general perception issues in Pioneer Square. Those events and activities enliven the park and market our neighborhood without any effort from the rest of us, but with obvious effort and dedication from the CCP team.



A few comments from our 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 surveys:

- ❖ Thanks, Seattle Parks are wonderful! I LOVE the cultural activities and think they are important to create opportunities for people to do healthy things with their neighbors. I especially love that you can learn to grow food in free workshops and also listen to live music.
- ❖ My biggest concern is feeling safe in the downtown area during the business day. Even if I am not attending an event, the atmosphere of the parks have dramatically changed. I feel confident to walk thru Occidental Park, for example, during the day, knowing there are other people there besides the homeless. I think the program(s) make Seattle parks very positive to visitors and possibly benefit the citizens of Seattle even more so. I love the tree socks!!
- ❖ i loved my seattle tilth gardening class! it was so fun and very very informative. step by step instructions right down to where to get the dirt and compost and which brands to buy made gardening easy even for a very busy person like myself. i also discovered cal anderson park and the free yoga there too. awesome! please keep these classes going!
- ❖ Occidental Park was more active, full of tourists, and looked cleaner and more welcoming than ever before. The energy in the park was different this summer and felt much happier.

LANGSTON HUGHES PERFORMING CENTER STORIES



Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center Summer Musical – 2007

As a cast member in the Summer Musical from 2004 to 2007, Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center staff helped me to become more confident as we performed before thousands on stage at the Paramount Theatre and The Seattle Rep. Staff taught us about performing, self respect and discipline during those amazing summers. In 2007, I went on to major in theater at Howard University in Washington DC. Since then, I performed in Ain't Misbehavin' at Atlas Theatre, Snowy Day at Adventure Theatre in addition to other productions. Recently, I was cast in Dream Girls at Signature Theatre in December 2012, in addition to being a cast member in the TV show Bizkid\$ for several years. Many of my friends from the Summer Musical's at LHPAC have gone on to be successful performers as well, or have become successful in other fields because of the confidence, discipline and self respect they gained at LHPAC. My time at LHPAC is treasured and the memories are precious to me and my friends. If not for LHPAC, many youth would be living hopeless lives because LHPAC was the place where they learned that they were good, worthy, talented and beautiful. **Laureen Dupree, Artists, Actress and Singer**



I was in the play "Obama on my Mind" (2009) which was new and challenged me artistically but it was also politically current and relevant way beyond just being a play. it inspired the whole cast and gave me a sense of pride every night as I saw the impact the work had on audience members. Since the play, I have worked and volunteered at every possible opportunity. **Josephine Howell, Singer Actress.**



We are thrilled to be working in partnership with LHPAC for our upcoming All-SMP Concert & Celebration this June. For years, we have had the opportunity to bring students (numbering in the hundreds) to such events as the Seattle Symphony's community concerts, and visiting artists, the Marian Anderson String Quartet (sic – at LHPAC). And now our students will be able to perform on the very same stage! We treasure these opportunities - what a wonderful resource - and just blocks away from where we hold our after-school music sessions! - **Scott Gelband, Executive Director, Seattle Music Partners**



The histories of red and black America have long intertwined. As seen in our most recent census results, Native American and African American blood have come together in one river flowing through the veins of a significant portion of this nation's Indigenous peoples. That this kinship should be reflected on the stage and in the programming of Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center is cause for celebration of a shared vision of cultural sovereignty. **Fern Renville Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Managing Director, Red Eagle Soaring Native Youth Theatre**



DE CAJON Project is a community based arts organization that seeks to raise awareness about the cultural contributions of peoples of African descent in Peru. As one of very few organizations focused on the African Diaspora it is crucial for us to have a partner like Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center. LHPAC serves as a home base for many artists and organizations like DE CAJON Project; it fosters and supports collaborations among artists and activists with similar goals and vision. The facility is world class and allows space for multicultural conversations and creative exchange. **Monica Rojas-Stewart, Ph.D. Director, DE CAJON Project**



Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute is a vessel for the recreation reaffirmation and rededication of the Afro Diaspora Arts. LHPAC holds the wisdom to inspire and the facility to make truth a new way of creating on the African American traditions that benefit people of all walks of life. **Jennifer Johns, 2012 LHPAC Artist in Residence and National Performing Arts Activist**



Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center came to being through the struggles of the civil rights movement. It is the historic gathering place for people who are concerned with African American Culture and Art. It is a place where we look to Art that deals with Social Justice and Equity and I was on the previous advisory council for 5 years because of these values. Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center also represents the Global Diaspora. It is a place of leadership and pride to the African American Community. **Cecilia Beckwith, PhD, Community Member**



LHPAC Summer Musical – 2007

I was a cast member in the Summer Musicals and participate in volunteering, photography and vocal performances at Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center since around 2006. Now I'm a junior at Seattle Academy of Arts and Sciences. Singing is the one thing I love to do most. At LHPAC, I sang in the Bobo's 2009 Summer Musical, at the Greenlake Festival of Lights, as well as other events. No other organization has given me this opportunity and that means so much to me. LHPAC is the only place I know of where I can do the things I love to do. Also, LHPAC staff really cares about youth. So many youth know the staff and they want to participate in programs and volunteer. LHPAC is a great place to have fun and to grow. **Leila Gant, Youth Artist and Performer**



I searched far and wide last spring seeking a summer program for the arts. I specifically was looking for a program that was a diverse first class operation. It needed to offer a fun and challenge for my granddaughter. My granddaughter had participated in drama, dance, and music classes on the east side for over six years. The programs were okay yet I knew there was something missing. That something was the programs you provide and amazing staff at Langston Hughes provided. Each day I drove happily from Issaquah so Trinity could attend the performing arts program. I was excited about her teachers and the excitement they brought each day. It is not just about the curriculum, it is also about the dedication of the staff towards students and each of them taking a personal interest in those students beyond the class room. I am impressed with the program, the professional staff and the education my daughter received. The teachers were creative, took time to work with each child independently and made them feel special. Currently my granddaughter has used the tools she learned at Langston Hughes to audition for other things. She will play Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz and has three solos in a Spring Festival. After the summer program at LHPAC she started playing the piano, writing songs, and creating her own music. She loves her teachers and can identify with their passion for the performing arts. At ten years old she has identified her teachers at LHPAC as her role models. We plan to build our summer vacation around LHPAC summer programs. She would love to take classes in the fall also. It was an honor for all our family to know that we have Langston Hughes here in Puget Sound. Langston Hughes is the model that all performing arts school should use. Thank you for being a Hub in the community. **Sonya Manning – Community Member.**



Freshest Roots' partnership with Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center has enabled Freshest Roots to reach a new community of artists and advocates. The partnership has been an opportunity for cross-organizational mentorship. Our collaborative efforts are an essential aspect of community building and have been more than successful in captivating audiences from the Greater Puget Sound. **Tony Innouvong Community Organizer and Teaching Artist - Freshest Roots**



Langston Hughes is our communities' cultural voice and keeps opportunities for African American artists alive. **Phyllis Yasatake, actress, parent, volunteer**



The (Saturday) auditions were great. The youth were expressive, creative, and prepared. The Judges did an excellent job of critiquing them, giving positive feedback, and practical advice to help improve their performances. This is such a great catalyst to make youth throughout the city and the community at large, aware of the opportunities available at and through Langston Hughes Performing Art Center. We

look forward to working with you in inspiring current and future generations of artist and performers. **Myron Leffall, Executive Director - MyronL@gamenw.org**

PARKS COMMONS STORIES



Born This Way Kafe'

SEATTLE - It's prom season in Western Washington and the City of Seattle wanted to make sure teens who didn't feel comfortable at traditional dances would have a way to celebrate. The event was called the "Purple Prom" and the color was all over the Miller Community Center in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood. The Saturday night dance wasn't about a color scheme, instead it was about creating a feeling. "It's a way to engage our youth in a way they can come together and celebrate who they are and who they represent," said Recreation Director Sue Goodwin, who helped plan the event. The Purple Prom is one of several programs the city is sponsoring in their efforts to reach out to lesbian, gay and transgender teens. **King 5 News by AMY MORENO / KING 5 News**



Working in partnership with Randy Wiger and the Seattle Parks Commons Program has been a very valuable, positive experience. We have been working together with members of the Somali community (Techno-Formation Vocational Services) on a capacity building project, which includes programming for Somali youth, elders and women. As we have faced challenges, learning curves and brainstormed, Seattle Parks and Randy Wiger have been there every step of the way sharing resources, knowledge and support. I feel we have made more real progress on this project due to this partnership than we could have on our own. I've learned new ideas and new ways of community building and very much appreciate the support that is helping us to help the North Seattle Somali community. **Ann Fuller**
,Program Manager ,North Seattle Family Center, Children's Home Society of WA



“... DRCC/TAG has developed and nurtured partnerships with different organizations, agencies, non-profits and community groups that truly want to see change happening in the Duwamish River Valley and care about its communities. One of these organizations is Seattle Parks, specifically its “Parks Commons Program.” Without the support from Seattle Parks (both monetarily and logistically) and its staff, Randy Wiger, who played a key role in making sure the event was culturally competent, fun, safe and family-friendly, last year’s festival most likely wouldn’t have come to fruition. The festival was important to celebrate the diverse communities of the Duwamish River Valley on a year when it was most needed by them (closure of the South Park Bridge, economic recession, etc.), to support their local economy and helped us (DRCC/TAG) and over 40 other groups build community and connect with the community in an effective, personal and friendly way. We applaud and are grateful to Seattle Parks, its “Parks Commons Program” and its staff for the great work they do! Keep it up!” **Alberto Rodriguez, Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition / Technical Advisory Group (DRCC/TAG),**



In 2011 Events in the park and meetings to discuss concerns of the neighborhood have provided residents with an opportunity to connect with their neighbors, work on common projects, develop leadership skills, learn about community resources and events open to them in the broader Lake City community and in the North End; and increase a sense of stewardship over the park. The perceived availability of drugs has diminished. Positive use of the space for events such as barbecues and movie nights have displaced many of the negative uses such as drug dealing, substance abuse and fighting in around the park. Since the Community Commons program began residents have reported feeling safer in the park. **Kelly McKinney, Project Coordinator, Seattle Neighborhood Group**



As a community person from South Park I really like to have access to our Duwamish River and enjoy the beautiful wildlife and beautiful surroundings the river has. I really support the idea of encouraging people to make a good use of the River and create ownership of the community through enjoying the River. One of the ways we like making the river welcoming is during our Duwamish River Festival, where we invite all the community of South Park and surrounding communities to enjoy a day full of activities and programs. For this, we are very grateful we partner up with the City of Seattle Parks Department and have their full support to allow the Festival and make it so the community can enjoy the Festival. I am very grateful the support, and the friendly staff, such as Staff member Randy Wiger who has always been helping us to walk us through the process, applications, rules, and responsibilities to use the park. It has made it easy to be able to partner up and work on this together. Thank you so much for all your help, support and guidance. **Paulina Lopez, South Park Information and Resource Center, Chair. DRCC staff--community activist**